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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities: views of States members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Note by the Secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. In the report on its fifty-seventh session, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space agreed that at its fifty-eighth session, in 2015, it would consider the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189), with a view to identifying those recommendations that could, to the extent practicable, be adapted to and instrumental for ensuring the safety of space operations and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities in general (A/69/20, para. 373).

2. In a note verbale dated 31 July 2014, the Secretary-General invited States members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to submit their views on the modalities of making practical use of the recommendations. The present note was prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of a reply received in response to that invitation.

II. Reply received from a State member of the Committee

Italy

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[2 February 2015]

Italy makes reference to the fact that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space agreed to consider, at its fifty-eighth session, the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities, with a view to identifying those recommendations that could, to the extent practicable, be instrumental for ensuring the safety of space operations and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities in general. Italy is convinced that many of the best practice guidelines proposed by the Working Group on Long-Term Sustainability of Space Activities of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee are integral to efforts to pursue transparency and confidence-building measures that enhance sustainability in space.

Italy appreciates the initiative taken by the General Assembly through its resolution 65/68, entitled "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities", in which it requested the Secretary-General to establish, on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, a group of governmental experts in order to conduct a study on transparency and confidence-building measures and to submit to the Assembly, at its sixty-eighth session, a report with an annex containing the study of the governmental experts. Italy underlines that in that resolution the Assembly clearly requested the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts, which was to adopt non-legally binding, pragmatic and implementable recommendations on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space with a practically oriented outcome.

Italy appreciates the consensus reached on General Assembly resolution 68/50, in which the Assembly welcomed the report of the Group of Governmental Experts,

encouraged member States to review and implement the proposed transparency and confidence-building measures and referred the recommendations contained in the report to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament for consideration, as appropriate.

Italy notes that the report of the Group of Governmental Experts clarified the characteristics that transparency and confidence-building measures should possess. Transparency and confidence-building measures need to be clear, practical and proven in order to achieve their goals. There are certain characteristics that transparency and confidence-building measures exhibit that could be used as a litmus test to determine whether a proposed measure could be an effective transparency and confidence-building measure or not. The application of transparency and confidence-building measures should be objectively verifiable by other parties, either independently or collectively. They should reduce or even eliminate the causes of mistrust, misunderstanding and miscalculation with regard to the activities and intentions of States.[1] With regard to this latter point, given their non-binding nature, transparency and confidence-building measures complement, but are not a substitute for, the verification measures of legally binding agreements and regimes.

The report of the Group of Governmental Experts concluded that States should review and implement the proposed transparency and confidence-building measures on a voluntary basis through relevant national mechanisms. Transparency and confidence-building measures should be implemented to the greatest extent practicable and in a manner that is consistent with States' national interests. States should regularly review the implementation of the transparency and confidence-building measures and discuss potential additional measures that may be necessary, including those necessitated owing to advances in the development of space technologies and their application.

From this perspective, Italy reiterates that some of the transparency and confidence-building measures identified by the Group of Governmental Experts are of particular relevance to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and it is pleased to share information concerning the ways in which some of them are implemented by Italy.

Exchange of information on the principles and goals of the outer space policy of Italy

According to paragraph 37 of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, States should publish information on their national space policies and strategies on their major outer space research and space applications programmes in order to build a climate of trust and confidence between States worldwide.

Italy implements that measure by publishing, on the website of the Italian Space Agency (ASI), the main documents containing the national space policy, its

[1] Peter Martinez and others, "Criteria for developing and testing transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) for outer space activities", *Space Policy*, vol. 30, No. 2 (2014), pp. 91-97.

strategic vision documents, such as the 10-year strategic vision for 2010-2020 and the detailed triennial activity plans (www.asi.it/en/agenzia/documenti_istituzionali).

The measure is also being implemented through international cooperation programmes at both the governmental and the agency levels. Bilateral meetings with various partners are occasions for an exchange of relevant information regarding national space policies, strategies and space application projects.

Information exchange and notifications related to outer space activities

In paragraph 39 of its report, the Group of Governmental Experts dealt with exchanges of information on orbital parameters of outer space objects and potential orbital conjunctions. It indicated that the implementation of that measure should include: (a) an exchange of information on the orbital elements of space objects; (b) the provision of registration information to the United Nations in accordance with the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space; and (c) the provision of public access to national registries of space objects.

Italy implements the above-mentioned measures in particular:

(a) By exchanging orbital data about national manoeuvrable satellites with competent entities of other Member States in the event of a close approach. Those data exchanges have been implemented under specific space situational awareness agreements. Such agreements have been signed either with national public bodies or with competent organizations at the operator level in other Member States;

(b) By implementing the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space and submitting, on a regular basis, the required information to the Office for Outer Space Affairs;

(c) By maintaining, through ASI, the national registry of objects launched into outer space, which is publicly available on the ASI website: www.asi.it/it/news/informazioni_sul_registro_nazionale_degli_oggetti_lanciati_nello_spazio.

Risk reduction notifications

In paragraph 42 of its report, the Group of Governmental Experts recommended that States should notify, in a timely manner and to the greatest extent practicable, potentially affected States of scheduled manoeuvres.

In the event of a close approach, when a modification of trajectory is needed to avoid a collision, Italy notifies the competent entities in other Member States of any scheduled manoeuvre.

Notifications and monitoring of uncontrolled high-risk events

According to paragraph 43 of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, States should support the development and implementation of measures aimed at exchanging information with and notifying, in a timely manner and to the greatest extent practicable, all States that may be affected, the Secretary-General

and relevant international organizations of predicted high-risk re-entry events, whenever the re-entering space object or residual material from the re-entering space object could potentially cause significant damage or radioactive contamination.

Italy has already developed a set of best practices in order to implement that recommendation. For the uncontrolled re-entry event of the Italian BeppoSax spacecraft, which occurred on 30 April 2002, a specific national coordination unit was set up. It was composed of both civil and military bodies, was coordinated by the Italian civil protection department and was tasked with continuously monitoring the re-entry event and predicting its progression. In particular, Italy regularly provided the United Nations and, through the local embassies of Italy, States potentially affected by the re-entry with updated forecasts of the time of passage over populated territory and the geographical band within which fragments could fall.

Contact with and visits to space launch sites and facilities

In paragraph 47 of its report, the Group of Governmental Experts encouraged States to consider, on a voluntary basis, expert visits to space facilities, including space situational awareness centres.

In conformity with applicable national laws and regulations, Italy welcomes visits by international delegations and/or experts to the facilities of ASI, such as the ASI Geodesy Centre in Matera, the San Marco Space Centre in Malindi (Kenya) and related centres of which ASI is a partner, such as the Advanced Logistics Technology Engineering Centre in Turin, the Italian Aerospace Research Centre in Capua and the European Launch Vehicle in Colleferro.

International cooperation

In paragraph 49 of its report, the Group of Governmental Experts recognized the paramount importance of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, as it provides a basis for all States to develop and strengthen their capacity to undertake and/or to reap benefits from space activities. Furthermore, international cooperation on scientific and technical projects between both space-faring and non-space-faring nations can contribute to confidence-building.

Italy implements that measure at both the governmental and the agency level. In particular, ASI operates under the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research and in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, within the framework of bilateral and multilateral relations and space cooperation agreements, by coordinating the Italian participation in European and international space projects.

At the bilateral level, Italy is party to six intergovernmental framework agreements on the exploration and use of outer space activities. ASI is currently party to approximately 60 bilateral agreements signed with various international partners, comprising both space-faring countries and countries with developing or emerging space capabilities.

At the multilateral level, Italy implements that measure by actively participating in various regional and international multilateral intergovernmental organizations, such as the European Space Agency, the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites, the European Telecommunications Satellite Organization and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in inter-agency committees and groups, such as the Group on Earth Observations, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems and the International Space Exploration Coordination Group, and in other technical forums.

Outreach

In paragraphs 60 and 61 of its report, the Group of Governmental Experts acknowledged that outreach measures can improve mutual understanding between States and promote cooperation at the regional, multilateral, non-governmental and private-sector levels. Space-faring States should inform the Secretary-General, the general public and the international scientific community of the character, conduct, locations and results of outer space activities, in accordance with the Outer Space Treaty.

Italy implements those measures by promoting and sponsoring various national and international space events in cooperation with European and other international partners, and by publishing on public websites, in particular the ASI website, information on space conferences, workshops and other outreach activities related to outer space.

Coordination

In paragraph 63 of its report, the Group of Governmental Experts encouraged States, including through their space agencies or other authorized entities, existing mechanisms and international organizations, to promote the coordination of their space policies and space programmes in order to enhance the safety and predictability of the uses of space. In paragraph 65 of the report, the Group also agreed that States, international organizations and private-sector actors conducting space programmes should establish focal points for coordination for the purpose of strengthening coordination in outer space activities.

Furthermore, States should seek to participate, to the maximum extent possible, in the outer space-related activities of intergovernmental entities of the United Nations system, such as the Conference on Disarmament, International Telecommunications Union (ITU), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and Commission on Sustainable Development. According to paragraph 67 of the report, States conducting space activities should actively participate, as members or observers, in activities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Italy implements those measures: (a) by actively participating, under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in all space-related activities of intergovernmental entities of the United Nations system, such as the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Conference on Disarmament, ITU, WMO and the Commission on Sustainable Development; and

(b) by ensuring the coordination of national experts at various levels (political, technical and legal), in connection with various issues under discussion in the relevant international forums.

Conclusions and recommendations

Italy welcomes the fact that, in paragraph 69 of its consensus report, in its final conclusions and recommendations, the Group of Governmental Experts endorsed efforts to pursue political commitments to encourage responsible actions in, and the peaceful use of outer space, for example in the form of a multilateral code of conduct. Italy is firmly convinced that the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts are complementary to other ongoing multilateral diplomatic efforts to enhance the safety, security, predictability and sustainability of outer space activities. Italy is actively engaged in those ongoing efforts and in ensuring the adoption of multilateral non-legally binding instruments on voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures to promote the long-term sustainability and security of the space environment, and recognizes that that goal is of vital interest to the entire international community.